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RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 6889
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 3961
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 4273
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 5785
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 0193
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 6578
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TAGS: [SNAR](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [ASEC](#) [RS](#) [BL](#)
SUBJECT: DECERTIFICATION: EVO SETS STAGE TO CUT COOPERATION

REF: A. LA PAZ 2005
[1](#)B. LA PAZ 1995

Classified By: A/EcoPol Chief Brian Quigley for reasons 1.4 (b)(d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Early indications that the Bolivian government would confine its reaction to the U.S. counter-narcotics (CN) decertification decision to anti-U.S. rhetorical attacks (refel a) are fading as government officials appear to be laying the groundwork to limit or sever CN assistance and cooperation. Drug Czar Felipe Caceres announced publicly late on September 17 the Bolivian "nationalization" of USG support for Bolivian CN forces and that Bolivia was turning to Russia for CN assistance. President Evo Morales blasted the "political" decision to decertify as punishment for his September 11 decision to PNG Ambassador Goldberg. Morales expanded his criticism beyond CN efforts, threatening the "ejection" of all USG organizations "conspiring" against him. Meanwhile, coca union leaders from Morales' regional base of Chapare rallied to his side, demanding either the removal of all USG CN efforts or U.S. acceptance of the government's "change agenda." Opposition and media pundits are largely blaming the government for the decertification. End Summary.

Evo Has Finger on "Eject" Button for USG Assistance

[1](#)2. (SBU) After a day of, for Bolivia, relatively muted criticism of the U.S. decertification of Bolivian counter-narcotics efforts, President Evo Morales came out swinging. Morales reiterated the decision was made based on "exclusively political grounds," that he would not accept U.S. "blackmail," and foreshadowed the "ejection" of USG

organizations that are "conspiring" against him. Morales firmly characterized the decertification decision as a U.S. reaction to his PNGing of Ambassador Goldberg. "I am certain that if the Ambassador of the United States had not been expelled, there would not be a black list (for Bolivia)."

USG CN Assistance: Return to Sender

13. (SBU) The government announced late September 17 that it would eliminate U.S. incentive payments for Bolivia's counter-narcotics forces (FELCN and UMOPAR). The Bolivian government announced plans to "nationalize" the bonuses itself or with the assistance of "friendly countries." (Note: Bolivian officials previously announced in June that the government would take over the bonuses in 2009, it remains unclear if the government is accelerating the timeline or if payments would continue at the same rate after "nationalization." End Note.) Vice Minister for Social Control Felipe Caceres said, "We will assign a budget for food, uniforms, and bonuses to be paid by the national government, not by the U.S. Embassy." To date, the Bolivians have not, in fact, discontinued our incentive payments to Bolivian CN forces.

14. (U) Morales publicly characterized U.S. counter-narcotics assistance in general as a method for the United States to "seek loyalty" from government officials and urged officials not to "enter into this game." Morales said he told his cabinet, and particularly incoming Minister of Development Planning Carlos Villegas, not to "put any confidence in the United States because we are anti-imperialists."

Bolivian Drug Czar Blasts USG "Revenge," CN Policy

15. (C) Drug Czar Caceres publicly described the decertification decision as "blackmail" and "revenge" of the Ambassador's expulsion from Bolivia and USAID's expulsion from the Chapare region of Cochabamba Department (state). Caceres also blasted the U.S. "double standard" of "casting doubts on Bolivia's" CN efforts when the United States "does not have a policy to reduce the demand." Caceres also rejected DEA statistics that Bolivia's coca cultivation has increased 14 percent over the last two years. (Note: The government has been focusing on the UN's figures for 2007, which note a 5 percent growth rate, although when taken over the two-period, the UN's figure of 13 percent growth is virtually identical to the U.S. 14 percent estimate. Caceres has called for a September 22 meeting with NAS Director and DEA Attache'. End Note.)

Turning to CN Assistance From Russia, With Love

16. (SBU) Caceres announced September 16 that Bolivia would be turning to Russia for counter-narcotics training, intelligence, and logistical assistance. "We are finalizing details for our next visit to Russia, at the invitation of the Russian Embassy, to sign a bilateral agreement for (counter-narcotics) cooperation." He added that Moscow had already agreed to donate a helicopter for a pending increase in counter-narcotics efforts in the Yungas region. (Note: The government is in negotiations seeking USG support for enhanced eradication efforts in the Yungas. The Yungas and Chapare regions are Bolivia's two main coca-producing regions. End Note.)

Chapare Coccaleros Rally Around Evo

17. (SBU) The Vice President of the Six Federations of the Tropics (Chapare coca union boss), Asterio Romero, said September 18 that the government is evaluating the U.S. assistance presence in the Chapare. Romero explained that coca union leaders are demanding the departure of U.S. counter-narcotics efforts "if the United States does not respect and accept the politics of change that the government

of Evo Morales is applying." Romero assured that Chapare coca producers were supportive of the government's "social control" counter-narcotics strategy and that they would increasingly seek to channel CN assistance from international organizations, particularly Unasur governments. (Note: In defiance of internal union rules governing tenure limits, President Morales remains the President of the Six Federations and at the core of its decision making. End Note.)

Opposition/Pundits Defend Decertification Decision

18. (U) Opposition leaders and media pundits have, meanwhile, attempted to explain a rational basis for the decertification decision and blame the government for perceived shortcomings in its CN efforts. Opposition Congressman Ernesto Justiniano (Podemos, Santa Cruz) was perhaps the most vocal, explaining the decertification simply reflected the reality of the situation in Bolivia: "We are being stigmatized as a country of narco-traffickers thanks to the works of Evo Morales." He explained the U.S. decision was based on Bolivian failure to comply with bilateral CN agreements, particularly in the last two months (an apparent reference to USAID and DEA being kicked out of the Chapare). Justiniano called statistics of only marginal increases in coca production "lies," placing the actual annual increase at 50 percent.

Comment

19. (C) While public statements seem to be setting the stage for ending CN cooperation with us, we have seen similar rhetoric before that did not result in action. We continue to stress to the government that we stand prepared to continue working with them on counter-narcotic cooperation that should serve both our national interests. End Comment.
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